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AUTHOR	Perez, Coralie
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ABSTRACT

While disparities in access to training are identified as a weakness of the training system initiated by the Continuing Training Law 1971 in France, public sector agents--one-fourth of all employees in France--seem better off. However, this hardly means generosity of the public sector's training policy is the sole cause or that training procedures and content differ radically from the private sector. Rate of access to continuing training for public service agents is significantly higher than that of private sector employees, but the main difference between public and private sector training has to do with long-term training programs. Job structure by occupational group partly explains greater overall access to training in public service, where managers and middle-level workers--categories that acquire a great deal of training in both sectors--make up about one-half of the public sector but only one-third of the private. A higher percentage of civil servants aged 50-54 continue to be trained. Half of public service employees are involved in training; the adage says, "Training leads to training." Similarities between public and private sectors seem greater than the differences. In both sectors, employer-financed training sessions aimed at job adaptation are prevalent. The apparent similarity of the training procedures might hide differences in the relationship to training from one sector to another, e.g. training is more often imposed in the private sector. (YLB)

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Continuing Training in the Public Service

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Training & Employment

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FROM CEREQ AND ITS ASSOCIATED CENTRES

Continuing Training in the Public Service

In the face of an acute demographic problem and its own changing missions, France's public service might well be expected to give continuing training an increasingly important role. But what do we know about training practices in this sector, notably in comparison with the private sector? If the nature of the disparities in access are similar, the overall access to training is less selective in the public sector. This situation cannot be explained solely in terms of the 'civil servant' status.

In recent reports on the public service, continuing training is presented as one of the essential dimensions of State modernisation and a motor of "job and competence planning" (*gestion prévisionnelle des emplois et des competences*, GPEC). Thus, in the face of the changing functions of the public service and the massive number of retirements expected between now and 2010, the recent Cieutat Report on the modernisation of the public service calls for a reconsideration of the initial and continuing training of civil servants in order to "facilitate recruitment and organise it differently" and "make continuing training an obligation taken into account throughout the career". Buttressed by triennial framework agreements, the civil servants' right to training has gradually given agents tools which are similar to those of private-sector employees, including training leaves, skills audits and adaptation leaves. The use made of these tools, however, is closely tied to the aims of the respective training policies and the constraints weighing on employees in each sector.

While the disparities in access to training—to the detriment of those with fewer academic credentials—are identified as a weakness of the training system initiated by the Continuing Training Law of 1971, public-sector agents, who constitute one-fourth of all employees in France, seem to be better off. But this hardly means that the generosity of the public sector's training policy is the sole cause, or that training procedures and content differ radically between the two sectors.

Figure 1. RATES OF ACCESS TO TRAINING

	Public-service agents	Private-sector employees
By age		
15-24	47 %	35 %
25-39	49 %	34 %
40-49	47 %	31 %
50 and over	38 %	24 %
By gender		
Men	46 %	32 %
Women	46 %	31 %
By diploma level		
Bac +3 or more years of study	57 %	54 %
Bac +2 years of study	58 %	50 %
Baccalauréat	50 %	40 %
Technical school certificates (CAP, BEP)	40 %	29 %
Lower secondary certificate (BEPC)	42 %	28 %
No diploma	24 %	18 %
By job status		
Permanent – Indefinite-term contract	48 %	32 %
Contract employee – fixed-term contract, temporary	40 %	27 %
Subsidised jobs	47 %	59 %
By occupational group		
Managers	55 %	53 %
Middle-level occupations	55 %	46 %
Office workers	39 %	30 %
Operatives	30 %	21 %
TOTAL	*47 %*	*32 %*

Percentages of personnel participating in at least one training session of at least three hours between January 1999 and February 2000.
Source: Continuing Training 2000 survey. *Treatment:* Céreq

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MORE TRAINING FOR PUBLIC SERVANTS THAN PRIVATE-SECTOR EMPLOYEES

According to the data from Céreq's "Continuing Training 2000" survey (see Box page 4), the rate of access to continuing training for public-service agents is significantly higher than that of private-sector employees: 47 percent versus 32 percent. It is particularly high in the State sector (Fonction publique d'Etat, FPE) and the health sector (Fonction publique hospitalière, FPH), where it reaches 50 percent, while in the territorial authorities (Fonction publique territoriale, FPT), it is closer to that of the private sector (39 %). In addition, trained public servants most often declare that they have had only one training experience in the territorial authorities and the private sector, while one-half of those in the State and health sectors have had several.

In addition to benefiting from greater access to training than private-sector employees, public servants participate in training sessions which, on the average, are longer. While 60 percent of such training lasts less than twenty-four hours (about three days) in both sectors, training sessions of one to two weeks are more frequent in the public service. In all, civil servants spend an average of 201 hours in training over 14 months, compared to 143 hours for private-sector employees.

But the main difference between public- and private-sector training has to do with the long-term training programmes. This is not surprising given the initial objectives of vocational training in the public service, as recalled in the preamble to the framework agreement of 22 February 1996: social advancement and preparation for internal competitive examinations. In public and private sectors alike, one-fourth of those queried had participated in less than sixteen hours of training over fourteen months. The total median time spent in training is thirty-nine hours in the public service and thirty-two hours in the private sector, a relatively slight difference amounting to about one day.

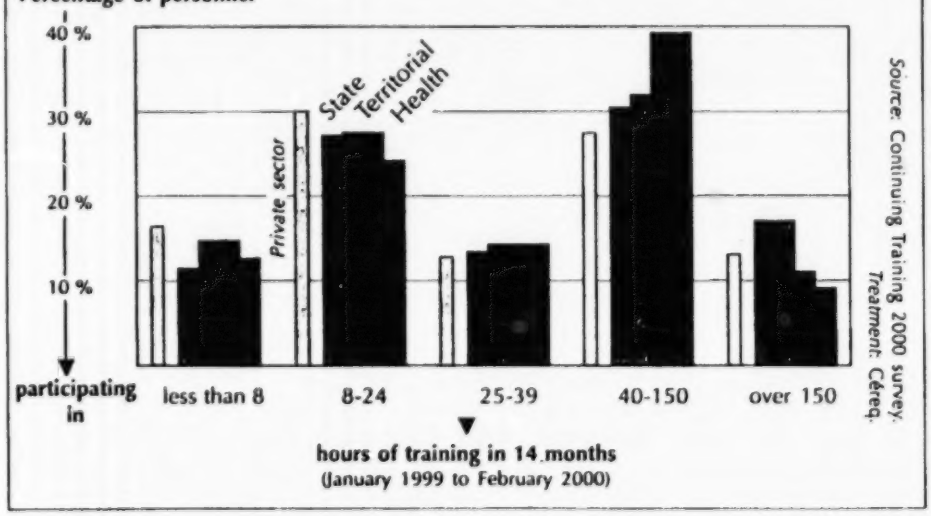
On the other hand, one-fourth of the private-sector employees had more than sixty-four hours of training over fourteen months, while one-fourth of the civil servants had more than seventy-hours. This disparity is mainly due to the health sector, where most agents had between 40 and 152 hours of training over 14 months and, to a lesser degree, the State sector, where 18 percent of the agents had more than 150 hours of training (see Figure 2). Thus, civil servants have greater access to training than their counterparts in the private sector and certain of them spend considerably more time in training.

COMPARABLE DISPARITIES IN ACCESS— BUT TO A LESSER DEGREE

Participation in training is systematically greater in the public service, regardless of the criterion selected (with the exception of personnel benefiting from subsidised contracts; cf. Figure 1). Thus, one out of every two *baccalauréat*-holders in the public service has participated in training, compared to two out of five in the private sector. But the disparities are of a similar nature: the agents who are more likely to receive training are those with diplomas, managers rather than operatives or office workers, permanent civil servants rather than contract employees, and under fifty years of age. But these disparities are considerably less significant in the public sector.

The job structure by occupational group partly explains the greater overall access to training in the public service, where managers and individuals in the middle-level occupations—categories which acquire a great deal of training, in private and public sectors alike—make up about one-half of the public service but only one-third of the private sector. In the territorial authorities, where the distribution by diploma level and job category is similar to that of the private sector, the agents' behaviour seems closer to that of private-sector employees than to that of the agents in the other public services.

Figure 2. TIME SPENT IN TRAINING



The age distribution of public agents is quite different from that of the private-sector employees (cf. Figure 3) but this is less true for access to training by age. Regardless of their age, private-sector employees clearly have less access to training but, in public and private sectors alike, the rates of access to training largely remains at the same level until about age fifty. Although training participation drops afterwards, 43 percent of civil servants in the 50-54 age bracket continue to be trained, compared to 27 percent of private-sector employees of the same age.

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The difference in access to training between public service and private sector may thus be explained in part by the adage: "Training leads to training". This difference seems less related to the 'civil servant' status or the greater extravagance of the public sector than to the specific nature of the occupations and activities it encompasses. Indeed, half of those employed in the public service are involved in teaching, health or information activities and show a 50 percent rate of access to training. In the private sector, the most frequent activity, production, occupies one-fourth of the employees, whose rate of access to training is 23 percent.

The foregoing observations suggest that access to training cannot be analysed as a simple, rational investment decision to be recouped in function of the worker's age. Rather, they call for a broader search for the motivations in workforce management policies, work activities or even individual strategies. If civil servants have greater access to training, can we say that they are trained differently from private-sector employees?

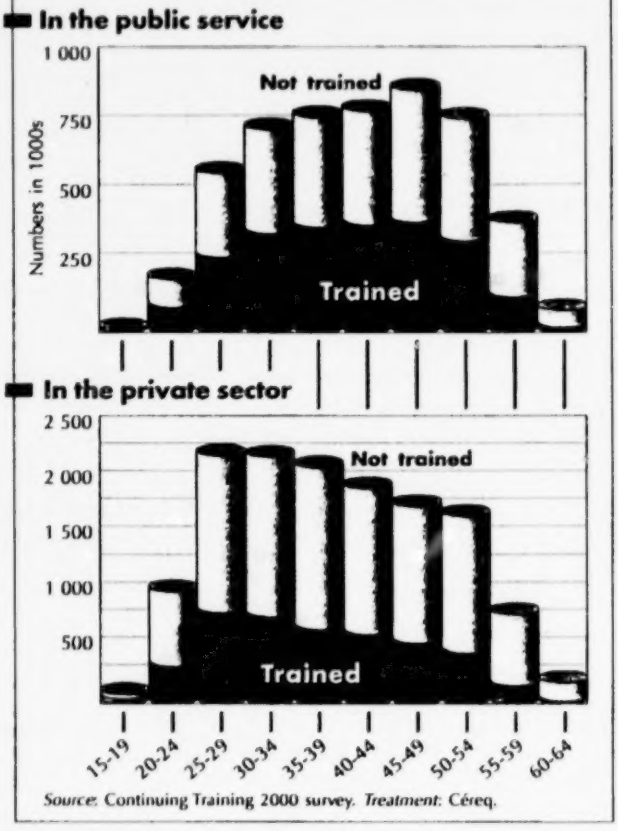
TRAINING CONTENT: MORE SIMILARITIES THAN DIFFERENCES

In fact, where training content and procedures are concerned, the similarities between public service and private sector seem greater than the differences, insofar as we are basically dealing with employer-financed training sessions aimed at job adaptation. Such sessions represent 80 percent of the training carried out in the public service and this traditional formula is dominant in the private sector as well, albeit for 70 percent of the cases. More precisely, the proportion of training sessions appears to increase with the qualification level of the jobs—they represent 75 percent of the training in the territorial authorities and 80 percent in the State sector—regardless of whether training programmes for educational personnel are taken into account. Overall, one-third of the sessions are devoted to pedagogical training for educators and trainers or medico-social training. In-service training (most often related to office automation or computer skills) represents one-fourth of the total in the territorial authorities, which is the same as in the private sector. Last of all, self-training represents only a small part of the training effort in the public service (4 %), as in the public sector, but it is particularly present among educational personnel (9 %).

In the public service, as in the private sector, the personnel state that what they mainly expect from the training they receive is "adaptation to the job". This is by far the most frequent objective, associated with three out of four training situations. It must be noted, however, that in the public service, this goal can cover more varied motivations given the specific nature of certain training programmes in this sector, such as training prior to granting of permanent status (known as 'initial training' in contrast to training after the granting of such status, known as 'continuing training'). Obtaining a new job, meanwhile, constitutes the main objective of 7 percent of the training, which probably includes preparation for competitive examinations.

The French public service encompasses a great variety of occupations and activities, which means that the range of

Figure 3. NUMBERS OF PERSONNEL TRAINED IN FUNCTION OF AGE



Source: Continuing Training 2000 survey. *Treatment:* Céreq.

training fields is quite broad. As in the private sector, the largest group concerns computer training (15 %), mainly devoted to office automation and the use of computer programmes. This is followed by training more specifically related to the occupations in each sector: pedagogical training for educators and trainers and medico-social training each represent slightly more than 13 percent of the training in the public service. In the private sector, this occupation-related training bears on industrial techniques, trade and sales. Training related to human resources and management, which is encouraged by the Public Service Ministry in the context of job and competence planning, represents 12 percent of the total training (compared to 9 % in the private sector). General and discipline-based training, as well as that dealing with economics, administration or law, each represent 9 percent of public-service training.

The crossing of the different training dimensions—duration, speciality, expectation—and the characteristics of the trainees—age, category, status—allows us to identify two large groups of training:

- Training focused on specific occupations and aimed at job adaptation of permanent civil servants.
- Long training programmes, both general and disciplinary, which are aimed at changing jobs or obtaining a diploma and concern agents who are fairly young or non-permanent and who finance part of their training themselves.

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BUT BEHIND THE SIMILARITIES, DIFFERENT RELATIONSHIPS TO TRAINING

In both private and public sectors, the employer is the main source of financing for three-quarters of work-related training. However, only 21 percent of public-service agents, as compared to 34 percent of their counterparts in the private sector, state that their training was imposed on them. This difference does not seem to be tied to the qualification level of the jobs, for only one-fourth of the territorial agents, whose levels are similar to those of private-sector employees, were faced with compulsory training. Likewise, 40 percent of the public-service agents, as opposed to only 24 percent of private-sector employees, indicate that the training resulted exclusively from their own initiative. In this area, we find no significant difference between the different public services, since the behaviour of the territorial agents is in line with that of other civil servants.

Thus, the apparent similarity of the training procedures might hide differences in the relationship to training from one sector to another. We observe, for example, that training is more often declared to have been imposed in the private sector than in the public service, where the agents, better informed of their rights, seem more likely to exercise them.

In its function as a form of regulation in the modernisation of the State and a vehicle for the dissemination of knowledge, continuing training could lie at the heart of the transformations affecting both the missions and internal management of the public service. These issues, raised in the official reports, closely associate the managerial and economic dimensions of training. However, they overlook at least one crucial question if continuing training is to be mobilised, along with recruitment, to meet the imminent demographic challenge: how can the objectives of job and competence planning be made compatible with the principles presently governing mobilities? Indeed, if the acquisition of competences through continuing training comes more easily in the public service than in the private sector, it has little chance of being translated into upward mobility when the competitive examination and seniority remain the two main channels of professional advancement.

Coralie Perez (Céreq)

FURTHER READING

• *Fonctions publiques: enjeux et stratégies pour le renouvellement.* [Public services: issues and strategies for modernisation.] Report of the group headed by Bernard Ciexitat, Commissariat general du Plan. Paris: La Documentation française, 2000.

• *La formation des agents de l'Etat en 1999. Enquête statistique sur les actions de formation réalisées par les ministères en faveur des agents de l'Etat.* [The training of State agents in 1999. Statistical survey on training activities for State agents carried out by the ministries.] Direction générale de l'Administration et de la Fonction Publique, Bureau des statistiques, des études et de l'évaluation. 2 vols. April 2001.

• H. Lenoir. "Fonction publique et formation: approche comparative". [Public service and training, a comparative approach.] *Actualité de la formation permanente* no. 140 (January-February 1996).

The "Continuing Training 2000" survey

The data presented in this issue of *Training and Employment* are drawn from the "Continuing Training 2000" survey which complements the Employment survey conducted out by the French national statistics institute (INSEE) in March 2000. "Continuing Training 2000" was designed by Céreq and INSEE in partnership with the French Planning Commission, the Ministry of Employment's Department of Research and Statistics (Dares) and its Delegation for Employment and Vocational Training, the Ministry of Education's Planning and Development Department and the Junior Ministry for Women's Rights and Vocational Training.

*The survey was carried out among a sample of 28,700 individuals who were under 65 years of age, had completed their initial training and were not doing their military service at the time. These subjects were queried, in the form of face-to-face interviews, on their training experiences after exiting the school system, with more detailed questions posed about the fourteen-month period prior to the date of the survey. It notably permitted analysis of the rates of access to continuing training of the different categories of employees, or in other words, **the percentages of individuals involved in at least one training activity of at least three hours—regardless of the goal (explicitly professional or more personal) and the forms (training course, alternating training, in-service training or self-training)—between January 1999 and February 2000.***

Establishing the number of agents in the "public-service galaxy", to borrow the expression of François de Singly and Claude Thélot in *Gens du privé, gens du public: la grande différence* [Private-sector people, public-sector people: the big difference (Paris: Dunod, 1988)], is no easy task, as demonstrated by the latest report of the inter-ministerial Observatory on Public Employment. The exploratory approach undertaken here thus remains open to improvement. The number of agents in France's public service was estimated from INSEE's Employment survey, on the basis of the legal status and activity of the institutions employing the individuals queried. The economic activity corresponding to their job and occupation was used to identify the public service to which each agent was attached. In all, the number of public-service agents was estimated at 5,260,000, including 2,873,000 in the State sector (including teachers in private schools), 1,553,000 in the territorial authorities and nearly 833,000 in the health sector. Between January 1999 and February 2000, over 2,400,000 of these agents participated in a total of some 4,350,000 training activities of more than three hours.

*The data presented here are drawn from a report prepared at the request of a unit of the National Council for the Evaluation of Public-Service Training Policy (C. Lowenstein and C. Perez, *La formation des agents de la fonction publique* [The training of public-service agents], Céreq, January 2002).*

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